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homemakers' chat
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Friday, October 1, 1943

Subject: "WARMER CLOTHES FOR COLDER HOUSES." Information from clothing specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Red flannel underwear isn't likely to come into fashion again, but fuel supplies may be limited this winter. We may need to turn to our modern equivalents for the red flannels of 50 years ago. Clothing specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture suggest homemakers who are forehanded will make the most of all the available warm clothing they can provide in preparation for chilly houses, schools, offices, and workshops. It's plain common sense for every one to dress more warmly this winter than when houses and business places were heated way above 70 degrees.

When anyone dresses to stand extreme cold, the idea is to enclose a layer of air underneath a wind-proof outside fabric. A skier wears a woolen sweater or warm suit under a wind-resistant overall garment covering him from neck to ankles. This outside suit holds the air in the porous wool of the sweater or suit, and keeps his body warm, just as insulating material keeps your house warm. A child's playsuit keeps him warm for the same reason. Sometimes he wears a playsuit over an undersuit of the same cut but thinner material, and there is a layer of air between. Arctic flyers and sailors keep the cold out and the body warmth in by wearing wind breaker fabrics outside, and inner suits made partly of fur or feathers that hold the insulating layer of air.

Of course, we don't have to dress in ski suits or arctic outfits to keep warm in a cold house. But we can adapt the same principle and keep comfortable even when the room temperature is lower than we like. And we don't have to buy a lot of new clothes, either. Most of our personal insulation won't show. For example,

you probably like to wear a washable housedress for kitchen work. To keep warmer, you can put on more underneath -- warmer underwear, or a sleeveless sweater, or a quilted vest, and wear a warm slip, much as your grandmother wore a little knee-length flannel petticoat. Any of these garments would be more trouble to wash than the housedress. If you like to wear slacks to work in around the house they are warmer than a house dress and you can still wear a sweater under the shirt.

Moving around doing housework, even in a colder house, you don't feel as cold as when you sit still. Cold feet are no joke if you're studying lessons, sewing, or trying to read. Elderly persons, especially, suffer from poor circulation in their feet and hands. Provide plenty of wool socks for the school students and the older folks to wear on cold evenings, also bedsocks for night wear. Many older people like knee warmers, and you could make them easily from the sleeves of old sweaters -- the same sweaters you can make over into sleeveless vests.

The trunk and shoulders feel cold, too, if you're sitting still. Everyone in the family probably needs something extra for those 60-degree evenings. You could plan an old-fashioned shawl for grandmother, sweaters, slacks and warm socks and stockings for the children when they're doing their lessons, a quilted house jacket or sleeveless sweater or both for the man of the house, and something similar for yourself.

Such garments do not require new material. Make them out of odds and ends-- old sweaters that can't be worn to school any more -- scraps of wool material pieced together and quilted to a lining -- old sweat shirts that have acquired a dingy "tattle-tale grey". Sometimes it's worth while to reclaim old wool yarn by raveling it out and knitting it into something else, -- perhaps a child's garment. But even torn and stained sweaters and jackets hold body heat in well and are worth mending, washing and saving to wear under other clothes. You can cut away worn parts, bind armholes and necks, or use the knitted material like ordinary

fabrics to cut out some new garment.

But maybe you haven't any old knitted articles on hand. You may have an outworn wool dress or skirt that would make over into a warm blouse or jacket or sleeveless vest. Old knitted cotton underwear, quilted to cotton or rayon material, makes a heat-holding fabric for these extra garments. Quilted pajama tops might be welcome to those who sleep in chilly bedrooms.

Again, you can knit or crochet scraps of wool yarn into squares of different colors and put them together in several useful ways — for shawls, scarfs, or extra coverlets to wrap the baby in. Or you could blanket-stitch around small squares of wool pieces, then put them together in the shape you need.

All these suggestions are for ways of making discarded odds and ends of woolen fabrics and yarns and thick cotton materials into extra garments. You may also wish to buy commercially made knit underwear -- union suits or two-piece sets.

One more idea for cold rooms: Jumping into a cold bed in an unheated bedroom is one of the worst moments of the day. If you use outing flannel sheets instead of muslin sheets, they will feel much warmer to the touch. Thin wool blankets are even better if you see that bedsocks or some other foot covering is worn. The old-fashioned warming pan of live coals has retired in favor of a hot stone or flat iron or hot water bottle tucked into the bed half an hour before bedtime. The "bottle" needn't be rubber. In England, where the damp climate makes sheets feel cold the year around, they use earthenware hot water bottles with a cork in the side, affectionately called "piggies". Even if you can't get these bottles in this country any container that doesn't leak will assure you of a good night's sleep once your feet are warm. Make each person a bag to cover the hot water bottle, of thick enough material to prevent burns.

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